

# DOVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

**45 South State Street  
Dover, Delaware 19901  
(302) 736-7030**



In 1885, the Dover Public Library was established as a private subscription library. A group of Dover citizens, led by Manlove Hayes, served as founders. The library continued to attract many of Dover's most prominent citizens, including then 16-year-old William Duhamel Denney, who served as the second director of the library and was later governor of Delaware.

As membership grew, Mrs. J. P. Saulsbury of the Dover Century Club (and daughter of Manlove Hayes) led the fight to create a tax-supported public library. Under a new state law in 1902, the Century Club of Dover sponsored the creation of a publicly supported library in Dover, hence, the Dover Public Library became Delaware's first tax-supported public library. One year later, the law was changed yet again, to make Dover Public Library a school-district library.

By 1961, the collection was so large that a new building was needed. It was constructed at the corner of State and Budd Streets. This replaced the old library on the top floor of City Hall, which was reached by a circular stairway of 39 steps. In 1975, the Dover Public Library came under the control of Dover City Council. Expansion continued and, in 1993, new meeting rooms were developed in the basement. In 1994, the library became a part of the KentNet automated library system and discarded its old card catalogs. And in 1998, the Dover Library began its plan to add a branch library in the Schutte Park area on the west side of the city.

The Dover Public Library is a cultural and educational center for central Kent County and serves over 60,000 individuals. Over 600 individuals pass through its doors on a typical day.

## Key Individuals

*Manlove Hayes* rallied a group of supporters and established the first subscription library in 1885. *Mary E. Fulton* served as the director of the library from 1890-1928. *Mrs. J. P. Saulsbury* of the Dover Century Club (and daughter of Manlove Hayes) led the fight to create a tax-supported public library. *Virginia Bowles* was hired in 1961 as the first professional director of the library.